

California Coastal Cleanup Day Tops 1-millionth Participant Mark

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 25 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- California's beaches and inner waterways may be collecting spots for marine debris, but Californians have demonstrated their support for clean beaches by turning out by the tens of thousands at the 26th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day. They scoured beaches, shorelines, and inland locations, picking up trash and debris this morning, covering over 800 sites and gathering hundreds of tons of trash. These volunteers took part in the California Coastal Commission's 26th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day, part of the International Coastal Cleanup organized by Ocean Conservancy. Beach, inland waterway, and community cleanups took place up and down the California coast, from Mexico to the Oregon border, around San Francisco Bay, and at sites as far inland as Lake Tahoe and the Salton Sea.

With 70% of the cleanup sites reporting,

the statewide count stands at 73,377 volunteers.

Those volunteers picked up 692,203 pounds of trash

and an additional 59,228 pounds of recyclable materials,

for a total of 751,431 pounds.

The Coastal Commission expects to exceed 2009 record for

volunteer participation (80,622) when the final numbers are tallied.

Among all those people was the Coastal Cleanup Day program's 1 millionth volunteer! Since the program started in 1985, over 1 million people have participated in California's premiere volunteer event.

When asked "if you were the 1 millionth volunteer, what would you want people to know about why you came to the Cleanup today," Jessica Taff, Ellen Hyerim Hwang, and Mai Katayama, members of International Business Society and volunteers at Yosemite Slough in San Francisco responded: "It's important to be involved, to be responsible, and to make a connection to your community. We live around here. You can't walk down a beach, see it's dirty, and not do anything. Each of us has to be responsible. If we each do something small and make an effort, it won't become an overwhelming project."

Past Coastal Cleanup Day data tell us that most (between 60-80 percent) of the debris on our beaches and shorelines comes from inland sources, traveling through storm drains or creeks out to the beaches and ocean. Rain - or even something as simple as hosing down a sidewalk - can wash cigarette butts, bits of styrofoam, pesticides, and oil into the storm drains and out to the ocean. The California Coastal Commission is asking all Californians to take responsibility for making sure trash goes where it belongs - securely in a trashcan, recycling bin, or a hazardous waste dump when appropriate.

A new effort undertaken by the Coastal Commission and its Coastal Cleanup volunteers this year was a "BYO" initiative. The Coastal Commission asked volunteers to bring their own reusable bag or bucket and reusable gloves to the event, rather than using the single-use disposable items that are available at every site. The effort was embraced by local coordinators of the Cleanup, and early reports from around the state show the Cleanup effort significantly reducing the number of bags and gloves used this year. (In 2009, Coastal Cleanup Day volunteers used 130,000 plastic bags and 150,000 plastic gloves during the event.)

As occurs every year, some unusual items were found throughout California. The Winner of the **2010 Most Unusual Item contest** is a dead cow in a bag, found by a volunteer in Yolo County.

The Coastal Commission will award \$50 gift certificates to the volunteer who found the unusual item.

For the past five years, California Coastal Cleanup Day has shown steady growth in both volunteer and debris totals, and the initial results from 2010 look to continue this trend. "The success of Coastal Cleanup Day has always been a tribute to the many partnerships the Commission forms around the state to help run the event. 2010 is the finest example of this to date," said Eben Schwartz, Coastal Cleanup Day Director for the California Coastal Commission. "From our new partnership with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, designed to help spread the Cleanup along rivers and watersheds throughout the Sierra Nevada region, to the hundreds of non-profit groups and local government agencies that captain local and regional efforts, the Coastal Cleanup Day family continues to grow, binding the people of California to our coast no matter where they may live."

Results from last year: In 2009, 80,622 volunteers picked up over 1.4 million pounds of trash and recyclables statewide on Coastal Cleanup Day, the largest cleanup in the event's history and marking a 60 percent increase in participation over the past three years. 40 percent of all debris items picked up were cigarette butts – volunteers picked up over 394,000 of them in only three hours last year. This was the 25th straight year in which cigarette butts were the most numerous debris item picked up.

Those who were unable to make it to the beach for Coastal Cleanup Day can still participate in COASTWEEKS, a three-week celebration of our coastal resources that takes place across the United States. The Coastal Commission has a calendar of COASTWEEKS events on its website. Volunteers are encouraged to contact the California Coastal Commission for more information about COASTWEEKS. To get involved with COASTWEEKS, or to find out how you can become a Coastal Steward throughout the year, please contact the Commission at (800) COAST-4U or visit our Web site at www.coast4u.org.

The statewide event is presented by the California Coastal Commission with major statewide support from Crystal Geyser, Oracle and Whole Foods Market. Additional support comes from Nature's Path and Waste Management. Other sponsors include Natracare, KPMG, Earth Friendly Products, See's Candies and Fairmont Hotels and Resorts. Northern California media sponsors include KFOG Radio and KPIX/CW Bay Area TV. Northern California media support also comes from the San Francisco Department of the Environment, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and Marin County Board of Supervisors.

California Coastal Cleanup Day 2010 is supported by the California Coastal Commission, California State Parks Foundation, and Ocean Conservancy. This event is made possible by the hard work of hundreds of local non-profits and government agencies throughout the state and tens of thousands of volunteers annually.

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